

## NewsFeature



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**CIVIC  
PRIDE**

## Take a journey back to Market Square in poignant 1919 film

**W**HEN an important centenary comes along, responsibility lies with the present generation to mark the moment. In the past four years, we have risen to the challenge for the beginning, the end and many of the battles of the First World War.

Whilst the rest of the country says 'goodbye to all that', Abingdon has one more significant centenary to take note of.

In August 1919, the town held its Peace Parade, with ceremonies, speeches and a parade through the streets, led by the Town Band; nothing particularly remarkable in that, you might think; they were happening all over the country, following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June.

However, the Abingdon Peace Parade was filmed in detail and 10 minutes of good quality footage survives, now in the care of the Imperial War Museums.

The limited spaces in the town centre made the Abingdon film particularly interesting because the cameraman caught it all. Every jostle, grimace, cheeky lass elbowing through the crowd. The impressive physiques of the policemen, children in their Christopher Robin outfits, ruffians, elderly matrons, sombre faces of the war-wounded.

Abingdon Town Council has a fine collection of town treasures that bespeak the civic pride of previous centuries, crowned by the 400-year-old mace, still used in ceremonies and meetings.

Surely today though, our values should encourage us to prize above all this treasure that is so evocative and informative about our past, the celluloid that allows us to get up close and personal with Abingdon 1919.

The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society felt they should not to allow this centenary to pass unmarked. With the support of a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, a volunteer-led project is under way to help the community celebrate and learn from this unique piece of film.

With archive film of this quality, we can all be historians. It's a primary resource that rewards intensive study. Every time you look at it, you spot something you hadn't noticed before. As human beings, we can draw valid conclusions about the behaviour and body language of people a century ago, without special training. As the centrepiece of the Heritage Festival, all will be able to be 'have-a-go-historians' and the free Interpretation Exhibition, running September 14 to 22 in the old Superdrug, unit will merge the research done by the project group with the contributions of our visitors.

On September 21, join in the Family Day on the Market Place, sampling food of the era, listening to music which was rapidly changing and find out more about the entertainments and costumes of the time.

There will be free walks, talks and open properties to view. The full programme is available at [abingdonheritage.org.uk](http://abingdonheritage.org.uk)